

## Committee on Equal Opportunities Report 1997-2002 KY Plan and OCR Partnership

The Committee on Equal Opportunities met April 15, 2002. The council staff reported that Kentucky's public postsecondary institutions continue to make progress toward achieving the commitments outlined in the Partnership Agreement with the U. S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights and *The 1997-2002 Kentucky Plan for Equal Opportunities*. The agreement, with the exception of the requirement of Kentucky State University to implement strategies to increase student performance on the PRAXIS II teacher certification test, is on track to be completed by December 31, 2002. A summary of the committee's activities follows.

### Committee Actions and Reports

*The Kentucky Plan:* The CEO voted to recommend that the council extend the effective date of the 1997-2002 KY Plan for Equal Opportunities until July 2004 (see page 67). The Kentucky Plan expires July 30, 2002. The partnership expires December 31, 2002. Kentucky will not know whether it will be released from the partnership until March 2003. Members of the CEO agree that even if the Commonwealth is released from the partnership the law still requires an equal opportunities plan for postsecondary education. Extending the current plan allows completion of the Partnership Agreement and also allows sufficient time to develop a new equal opportunities plan.

*Student Performance 2001 PRAXIS:* The Education Professional Standards Board reported on Kentucky's progress in implementing new PRAXIS II standards for teacher certification and the performance of Kentucky's students on the PRAXIS test following implementation of the new standards. The EPSB released the results of the first application of the new standards Monday, April 8. The EPSB reported that among the Kentucky institutions the pass rate for KSU students is the worst for the second straight year. Thirty-six percent of the KSU students passed the test compared to a statewide average of 93 percent, with the next lowest scoring institution's students having a pass rate of 70 percent. The EPSB also reported that African Americans at Kentucky's traditionally white institutions passed within the 80-90 percent range and in one instance at a higher rate than their white counterparts (100 percent compared to 99 percent).

The committee suggested that the council, the Education Professional Standards Board, and the institutions plan a one-day workshop to showcase best practices and to hear from an expert about teacher education strategies.

*KSU Teacher Education Program –Student Performance:* Kentucky State University attended the April 15 meeting to provide an update on the status of the teacher education program. The partnership directs KSU to: 1) implement initiatives that strengthen and enhance the KSU teacher education program; 2) identify "best practices" that have been employed to strengthen the

teacher education program; and 3) implement specific systematic strategies that are advantageous to increasing student performance rates on the PRAXIS II.

The pass rates for KSU students on the 2000-2001 Kentucky Title II – PRAXIS II exam – were lower than on the 1999-2000 exam. KSU representatives addressed the failure of its students to improve their performance and shared their plan of action to improve the teacher education program. The report introduced strategies that have been implemented as well as initiatives that are planned for the 2002 calendar year. For example, KSU implemented a new policy requiring all students to pass the PRAXIS II exam before being allowed to do their student teaching.

Following the KSU presentation, the committee asked chairman Steve Barger to send a letter to the president of Kentucky State University (with copies to the KSU Board of Regents, the Council on Postsecondary Education, and the Governor) expressing grave concern about the continued decline in performance on the PRAXIS exam by students in the KSU teacher education program. They also recommended that the council send a letter to the president of KSU, the Board of Regents, and the Governor expressing similar sentiments regarding the teacher education program. The committee asked KSU representatives to attend its June 10 meeting to give a status report on the program.

*UofL Teacher Education Program:* The University of Louisville attended the April 15 meeting to provide an update on the status of the teacher education program. The committee noted that an article appeared in the February 11 *Courier-Journal* stating that the UofL education program is struggling to attract minorities, particularly African Americans. The university was requested to attend and present more information about the program. UofL reported that: 1) the program has received 33 applications from African Americans for 2002-03 and approximately 17 will be admitted; 2) over the past five years the number of teacher education degrees awarded African Americans increased from 6.25 percent to 10.91 percent; 3) African Americans represent 19 percent of students enrolled in professional programs; 4) the university plans to have discussions about streamlining admission standards and making them more flexible; and 5) the university is planning to establish a consortium to address minority teacher recruitment and retention.

*Granting of Waivers by the CEO:* The committee will revise the waiver submission guidelines at its June 10 meeting. A new template for submitting the information will be presented by a CEO subcommittee. At the February 11 meeting the CEO approved recommendations by the subcommittee to improve the waiver process.

*2002-2004 Operating and Capital Budget Recommendations:* The council staff updated the committee on the status of the council's 2002-04 budget request, KSU enhancement, the federal land-grant match, and building renovations.

*Institutional Racial Harassment Policies:* The committee asked that a letter be sent to the president of the University of Louisville expressing displeasure that a fraternity under disciplinary status for a racially insensitive act on Halloween 2001 was allowed to receive an award (on national television) for completing community service associated with their punishment. Also, the committee requested that the institution address the increased incidents of

black-on-black issues, including student safety at social events, black fraternities fighting with black football players, and an incident at the university library.

*Reports to CEO by Institutional Representatives:* At its February meeting the institutions requested and the CEO agreed to allow time at each meeting for institutional representatives to report on campus diversity initiatives. Each institution, except the University of Kentucky and Western Kentucky University, discussed current campus activities and programs to improve diversity and the campus environment. The University of Kentucky and Western Kentucky University representatives did not attend the meeting.

### **Planned Activities**

The second statewide conference for participants of the Governor's Minority Student College Preparation program will be held June 2002 at Murray State University.

Northern Kentucky University will host the 15th Annual Academically Proficient African American High School Junior and Senior Conference June 14-15, 2002. Approximately 300 students, parents, and college representatives from across Kentucky are expected to participate.

The next meeting of the council's Committee on Equal Opportunities is Monday, June 10, 2002, in Meeting Room A at the council offices in Frankfort.

Staff preparation by Rana Johnson and Sherron Jackson